

CLAIMS

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for managing electronic data over a telecommunications medium indicative of information pertaining to the transport of a product between a point of origin and a point of destination comprising the steps of:

providing a database containing consumer-related and product-related information associated with the product, the database being accessible by a computer server system;

inputting into a portable computing device electronic data indicative of a unique customer number associated with the transport of the product between the point of origin and the point of destination, the portable computing device being capable of scanning barcodes;

inputting into the portable computing device electronic data indicative of a reason code if the product is being returned;

transmitting over the telecommunications medium to the computer server system at least a portion of the electronic data input into the portable computing device; and

updating the database with the transmitted electronic data.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

inputting into the portable computing device electronic data indicative of a product type code associated with the product; and

inputting into the portable computing device electronic data indicative of at least one code indicative of damage information associated with the product if the product is damaged.

3. The method of claim 2, the step of inputting data indicative of at least one code indicative of damage information comprising the step of inputting into the portable computing device electronic data indicative of at least one of:

a code indicative of damage type; and

a code indicative of surface type; and

a code indicative of damage location types.

4. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
determining whether a delivery is a split delivery; and
scheduling a second delivery if the delivery is a split delivery.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
crediting a customer for a return of the product; and
notifying a financial services group that a customer has been credited for the
return of a product.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:
inputting into the portable computing device data indicative of a service code.

7. The method of claim 6 further comprising the step of:
inputting into the portable computing device data indicative of a quantity
associated with the service code;
inputting into the portable computing device data indicative of a change in
cost associated with the service code; and
notifying a financial services group of the change in cost.

8. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of:
generating a delivery barcode label to be affixed to at least one of the product
and a container for the product, the delivery barcode label including at least one
barcode expressing data indicative of the unique customer number, a model number
for the product and a serial number for the product.

9. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
inputting into the computer server system a customer request for a return of
the product; and

5 generating at least one return barcode label to be affixed to at least one of the
product and a container for the product, the return barcode label including at least one
barcode expressing data indicative of a return authorization number, a first model
number for the product and a first serial number for the product.

10 10. The method of claim 9 further comprising the steps of:
inputting into the portable computing device data indicative of the return
authorization number;
inputting into the portable computing device data indicative of the first model
number;
15 comparing the first model number to a second model number affixed to the
product; and
determining whether a return of the product should be made if the first model
number does not match the second model number.

20 11. The method of claim 10 further comprising the steps of:
inputting into the portable computing device data indicative of the first serial
number;
comparing the first serial number to a second serial number affixed to the
product; and
25 picking up the product being returned if the first serial number does not match
the second serial number.

12. The method of claim 9 further comprising the steps of:
inputting into the portable computing device data indicative of a customer's
signature and data indicative of the customer's last name displayed as text.

13. The method of claim 2 further comprising the steps of:
inputting into the computer server system a customer request for a return of
the product; and

generating a return barcode label to be affixed to at least one of the product
5 and a container for the product, the return barcode label including at least one barcode
expressing data indicative of a return authorization number, a first model number for
the product and a first serial number for the product.

14. A method for managing electronic data over a telecommunications
10 medium, the data indicative of customer-related and product-related information
pertaining to the delivery and return of a product between a service center and a
customer's site, the method comprising the steps of:

storing electronic data indicative of consumer-related and product-related
information in a database of a computer server system;
15 associating a unique customer number with the product;
inputting the unique customer number into a portable computing device
capable of reading barcodes;
inputting a reason code into the portable computing device if the customer
refuses delivery of the product;
20 inputting a reason code into the portable computing device if the customer has
requested a return of a product;
uploading data from the portable computing device over the
telecommunications network to the database of the computer server system; and
updating the database of the computer server system with the uploaded data.

25 15. The method of claim 14 further comprising the steps of:
inputting a product type code into the portable computing device if the product
is being returned; and
inputting at least one code into the portable computing device indicative of
damage information associated with the product if the product is being returned due to
30 damage.

16. The method of claim 15, the step of inputting at least one code indicative of damage comprising the step of inputting at least one of:

a code indicative of damage type; and

a code indicative of surface type; and

a code indicative of damage location types.

17. The method of claim 14 further comprising the steps of:
inputting into the portable computing device data indicative of a service code if the customer requests a change of service; and

inputting into the portable computing device data indicative of a change of cost associated with the change of service.

18. The method of claim 14 further comprising the steps of:
crediting a customer for a return of the product; and
notifying a financial services group that a customer has been credited for the return of a product.

19. The method of claim 14 further comprising the steps of:
inputting into the portable computing device a return authorization number associated with the return of the product if the customer has requested the return of the product;

generating at least one return barcode label if the customer has requested the return of the product, the return barcode label including at least one barcode expressing data indicative of the unique customer number, a first model number for the product and a first serial number for the product;

affixing the return barcode label to at least one of the product and a container for the product; and

covering a delivery barcode label with the return barcode label if the delivery barcode label is affixed to at least one of the product and the container for the product.

20. A system for efficiently managing the transport of a product between a point of origin and a point of destination comprising:

a centralized computer server system capable of transmitting and receiving data over a telecommunications medium;

5 a database accessible by the centralized computer server system containing at least one of consumer-related information and product-related information associated with the transport of the product;

a processor operable to update the database with data received over the telecommunications medium;

10 a computer system situated remote from the centralized computer server system, the computer system capable of exchanging data with the centralized computer server system over the telecommunications medium; and

a portable computing device capable of collecting and storing electronic data by scanning barcodes, the portable computing device capable of downloading
15 electronic data to the computer system.

21. The system of claim 20 further comprising at least one of:

a delivery barcode label affixed to at least one of the product and a container for the product, the delivery barcode label including at least one barcode expressing data indicative of the unique customer number, a model number for the product and a
20 serial number for the product; and

a return barcode label affixed to at least one of the product and a container for the product, the return barcode label including at least one barcode expressing data indicative of a return authorization number, a model number for the product and a
25 serial number for the product.

22. The system of claim 20 further comprising:

a set of reason codes expressed as a first set of barcodes and adapted to be transported with a person transporting the product between the point of origin and the
30 point of destination, the first set barcodes comprising a plurality of barcodes expressing data indicative of a plurality of reasons why a customer may refuse to accept a delivered product and why a customer may return a product.

23. The system of claim 20 further comprising:

a set of product type codes expressed as a second set of barcodes and adapted to be transported with a person transporting the product between the point of origin and the point of destination, the second set of barcodes comprising a plurality of
5 barcodes expressing data indicative of a plurality of product types.

24. The system of claim 20 further comprising:

a set of damage type codes expressed as a third set of barcodes and adapted to be transported with a person transporting the product between the point of origin and the point of destination, the third set of barcodes comprising a plurality of barcodes
10 expressing data indicative of a plurality of damage types associated with the product.

25. The system of claim 24 further comprising:

a set of damage location codes expressed as a fourth set of barcodes and adapted to be transported with a person transporting the product between the point of origin and the point of destination, the fourth set of barcodes comprising a plurality of
15 barcodes expressing data indicative of a plurality of damage locations associated with the product.

26. The system of claim 25 further comprising:

a set of damage surface codes expressed as a fifth set of barcodes and adapted to be transported with a person transporting the product between the point of origin and the point of destination, the fifth set of barcodes comprising a plurality of
20 barcodes expressing data indicative of a plurality of damage surfaces associated with the product.

27. The system of claim 20 further comprising:

a set of service codes expressed as a sixth set of barcodes and adapted to be transported with a person transporting the product between the point of origin and the point of destination, the sixth set of barcodes comprising a plurality of barcodes
30 expressing data indicative of a plurality of services that may be performed at the point of destination.